

REMARKS

Claims 1, 6, 14 and 15 have been amended herein, and claims 13 and 76-80 have been cancelled. Claims 81 and 82 have been added.

The claims presently under consideration feature methods of forming a composite product. Claim 1, as amended, features a method that includes (a) providing a projection component comprising discrete projections of resin extending from a surface of a base; (b) locally heating distal ends of the projections using a non-contact heat source; (c) foreshortening the projections; and (d) applying a preformed substrate to the heated distal ends to adhere the preformed substrate to the distal ends of the projection component.

New claim 81 has been added to highlight important features of preferred implementations. In the method recited in claim 81, a sheet-form preformed fibrous substrate is applied to the locally heated distal ends to bond fibers of the preformed substrate to resin of the distal ends. As recited in new claim 82, in some preferred implementations the preformed substrate is selected from a group consisting of woven materials, non-woven webs of fibers and mesh materials.

Claim 1 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by either Aamodt or Levitt.¹ This rejection is respectfully traversed. Neither reference teaches or suggests bonding a preformed substrate to a projection component, as required by Applicants' claims. Moreover, neither reference discloses bonding fibers of a preformed substrate to resin of the locally heated distal ends, as required by new claim 81.

Aamodt does not disclose a preformed substrate. Instead, throughout her disclosure, Aamodt describes applying a layer to the projection component by extruding molten resin onto the stems just as the projection component enters the nip. It is clear that Aamodt never contemplates replacing this molten resin with a preformed substrate of any kind. When she explains that "any thermoplastic material may be used to produce the layer of material 24," at

¹ Claims 1-6, 8, 10-12, 15 and 18-27 have been rejected as anticipated by Aamodt, and claims 1-3, 7, 9, 11-15, 18, 19 and 22-27 have been rejected as anticipated by Levitt. While Applicants do not concede the points raised by the Examiner regarding the dependent claims, only claim 1 will be addressed herein.

col. 11, lines 58 et seq., no mention is made of polymeric films or sheets. Moreover, in the next paragraph Aamodt discusses modifying the melt flow and viscosity of the resins, and in each of the Examples Aamodt describes introducing a molten resin to the nip.

Moreover, Aamodt does not disclose heating with a non-contact heat source, but instead heats the distal ends by applying the molten resin to them.

Levitt does not disclose adhering a preformed substrate to the distal ends of the projection component, much less a preformed substrate. The Examiner is apparently interpreting engagement of Levitt's fastener component with a mating fastener component as "bonding." Applicants clearly do not intend the term "bond" to encompass releasable engagement of male and female fasteners. Instead, this term refers to adhering the substrate to the projection component. Applicants have amended claim 1 to clarify this point.

Nor does Levitt disclose applying a sheet-form preformed fibrous substrate to the locally heated distal ends to bond fibers of the substrate to resin of the distal ends, as recited in new claim 81.

In view of the above, it is not surprising that neither reference teaches or remotely suggests adhering a projection component to a preformed substrate that is selected from the group consisting of films, woven materials, paper, thermoplastic sheet, non-woven webs of fibers and mesh materials, as recited in claim 15, or woven materials, non-woven webs of fibers and mesh materials, as recited in claim 82. With regard to claim 15, the Examiner contends that "Aamodt et al. disclose the layer is selected from a variety of materials such as a thermoplastic sheet," directing Applicants' attention to col. 11, line 57 - col. 12, line 11. However, as noted above, Aamodt makes no mention, in this passage or elsewhere, of the use of thermoplastic sheet material. Instead, Aamodt merely mentions that various thermoplastics can be used as the layer of material extruded into the nip. The Examiner also contends that Levitt "discloses the second article can be various items including attachment to itself." However, the "second article" is not a substrate to which a projection component is adhered, but merely a cooperative fastener with which Levitt's fastener may be engaged.

Claim 4 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Levitt; claim 6 has been rejected as unpatentable over Levitt in view of Shepard, Tuman or Seth; claims 16 and 17 have been rejected as unpatentable over Aamodt in view of Provost; and claim 28 has been rejected as unpatentable over Levitt in view of Torigo. Applicants respectfully submit that, as none of the added references supply any teaching that in combination with Levitt and/or Aamodt clearly negates the patentability of the base claims, these claims are patentable for at least the reason that they depend from a patentable base claim as discussed above.

Claim 6 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. The Examiner contends that the scope of this claim is unclear. While Applicants do not concede that the claim as originally filed is unclear, in order to advance prosecution Applicants have amended this claim to recite that the preformed substrate includes exposed fibers facing the distal ends and the step of applying the preformed substrate includes encapsulating these fibers with resin of the distal ends. Applicants believe that this amendment addresses the Examiner's concerns and Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

It is believed that no fees are due with this submission. Please apply any charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050, referencing Attorney Docket No. 05918-256001.

Respectfully submitted,

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